

REMARKS

Claims 44-63 remain in this application. Claims 31-43 have been cancelled herein without prejudice to their subsequent reinstatement. Claims 44-63 have been added. The Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of this application in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

35 U.S.C. §102(e) Rejection - Shirasaki

The Examiner has rejected claims 31-35 and 40-43 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,593,034 issued to Shirasaki (hereinafter "Shirasaki").

These claims have been cancelled. Therefore, the rejection is believed to be moot.

35 U.S.C. §103(a) Rejection - Shirasaki in view of Shimada

The Examiner has rejected claims 36-37 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,593,034 issued to Shirasaki ("Shirasaki") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,735,961 issued to Shimada (hereinafter "Shimada").

These claims have been cancelled. Therefore, the rejection is believed to be moot.

35 U.S.C. §103(a) Rejection - Shirasaki

The Examiner has rejected claim 39 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,593,034 issued to Shirasaki ("Shirasaki").

These claims have been cancelled. Therefore, the rejection is believed to be moot.

New Claims Believed Allowable

Claim 44 recites at least “*adding a first gas to an enclosure having a second gas through a plurality of inlet ports of a vent*”. As understood by Applicants, Shirasaki does not teach or reasonably suggest adding a gas to an enclosure through a plurality of inlet ports of a vent. In particular, as understood by Applicants, Shirasaki discusses using one gas-passage opening to introduce nitrogen. See, for example, EXAMPLE 2 in column 6. Accordingly, for at least these reasons, claim 44 is believed to be allowable. Claims 45-50 depend from claim 44 and are believed to be allowable therefor, as well as for the recitations individually set forth therein.

Claim 51 recites at least “*adding a first gas to an enclosure having a second gas through an inlet port having a shape to distribute a flow of the first gas over a length of a side of the enclosure*”. As understood by Applicants, Shirasaki does not teach or reasonably suggest adding a gas to an enclosure through an inlet port having a shape to distribute a flow of the first gas over a length of a side of the enclosure. In particular, as understood by Applicants, Shirasaki discusses circular gas-passage openings. See, for example, EXAMPLE 1 in column 5. Accordingly, for at least these reasons, claim 51 is believed to be allowable. Claims 52-55 depend from claim 51 and are believed to be allowable therefor, as well as for the recitations individually set forth therein.

Claim 56 recites at least “*removing at least a portion of the second gas from the enclosure to the chamber by diffusion through the vent; and adding at least a portion of the first gas from the chamber to the enclosure by diffusion through the vent*”. As understood by Applicants, Shirasaki does not teach or reasonably suggest removing and adding gases by diffusion. In particular, as understood by Applicants, Shirasaki discusses

a covering member 7 having a gas nozzle 8 that can be connected to a gas-feed line or to a gas-discharge line. See, for example, column 4, lines 49-51. Accordingly, for at least these reasons, claim 56 is believed to be allowable. Claims 57-60 depend from claim 56 and are believed to be allowable therefor, as well as for the recitations individually set forth therein.

Claim 61 recites at least “*removing at least a portion of the initial gas from the enclosure through the vent by creating a vacuum in the chamber*”. As understood by Applicants, Shirasaki does not teach or reasonably suggest removing gas from an enclosure through a vent by creating a vacuum in a chamber. In fact, Shirasaki does not appear to even mention using a vacuum. Accordingly, for at least these reasons, claim 61 is believed to be allowable. Claims 62-63 depend from claim 61 and are believed to be allowable therefor, as well as for the recitations individually set forth therein.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner has indicated that claim 38 is objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Applicants sincerely thank the Examiner for the careful search and for finding allowable subject matter. For the reasons discussed above, Applicants believe that claims of broader scope than claim 38 will be found allowable. Therefore, at this time, Applicants elect to continue to pursue claims of broader scope than claim 38.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is believed that all claims now pending patentably define the subject invention over the prior art of record and are in condition for allowance. Applicants respectfully request that the rejections be withdrawn and the claims be allowed at the earliest possible date.

Request For Telephone Interview

The Examiner is invited to call Brent E. Vecchia at (303) 740-1980 if there remains any issue with allowance of the case.

Request For An Extension Of Time

The Applicants respectfully petition for a one-month extension of time to respond to the outstanding Office Action pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.136(a). A check in the amount of \$120.00 is included for this fee.

Charge Our Deposit Account

Please charge any shortage to our Deposit Account No. 02-2666.

Respectfully submitted,
BLAKELY, SOKOLOFF, TAYLOR & ZAFMAN LLP

Date: 7/11/05

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